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SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTAN: MARCH 9 MEETING WITH NATO SGSR AMBASSADOR ROBERT SIMMONS

11. (SBU) Summary: During his March 9 visit to Almaty, NATO SGSR for Central Asia Ambassador Robert Simmons met with NATO chiefs of mission to brief on the organizations efforts to implement Istanbul Summit commitments regarding Central Asia. The two most tangible results were the creation of his position, and the establishment of a NATO liaison officer for Central Asia. Simmons also briefed on Kazakhstan's progress toward IPAP, and answered questions on a variety of issues. End summary.

12. (SBU) On March 9, the Ambassador hosted a meeting for the NATO Secretary General's Special Representative (SGSR) for Central Asia, Robert Simmons, and Chiefs of Mission from NATO member states with a presence in Kazakhstan. Simmons gave a brief introduction explaining two main points stemming from the Istanbul Summit: 1) the mandate to give priority to Central Asia and the Caucasus by the creation of his position and 2) the appointment of Alexander Katranis as NATO liaison officer for Central Asia. Mr. Katranis will reside in Kazakhstan, splitting his time between Almaty and Astana.

13. (SBU) Simmons reported that Kazakhstan had initiated the Individual Partnership Action Program (IPAP) by submitting the first stage presentation package in early March. The submission of the IPAP presentation package was an extremely positive step in Kazakhstan's relationship with NATO. Simmons noted that NATO is optimistic regarding Kazakhstan's IPAP, as it outlines solid priorities in social and economic reform and defines what type of assistance Alliance countries and partners can give.

14. (SBU) In responding to a question about next steps, Simmons briefly outlined the three stages of commitment to NATO: the Individual Partnership Program (IPP), the Planning and Review Process (PARP), and IPAP. Kazakhstan had been active in IPP, identifying 160 activities for 2005. A PARP team was scheduled to visit in April to look at defense planning issues.

15. (SBU) Simmons responded to a question about Uzbekistan's level of commitment to NATO by stating that the latter submitted its IPAP over a year ago, but has yet to take the appropriate steps to meet program goals. By waiting and planning, Kazakhstan has a better opportunity of implementing each goal and ensuring success.

16. (SBU) Asked about China's view of NATO, Simmons responded that China has shown increased interest in NATO activities, but understands that NATO is not in competition. The Secretary General will visit China and Japan later in the year.

17. (SBU) In response to a question on border control and Russia, Simmons responded that NATO's role is to use tools for defense reform, such as language training, and provides less direct assistance to border control ministries.

18. (SBU) At the end of the meeting, the Ambassador encouraged Chiefs of Mission to maintain an interactive dialogue and offered to host periodic meetings. The Chiefs of Mission indicated that they were eager to coordinate with the new NATO liaison officer who will be responsible for ensuring sharing of information.

19. (SBU) Simmons encouraged Chiefs of Mission to provide input to Brussels and review documents to determine what each country can do for greater and more effective cooperation in Kazakhstan.

10 (U) Minimize for Dushanbe considered.

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